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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9111
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 0191
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN IMMEDIATE 0005
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH IMMEDIATE 9729
RUEHRH/CHUSMTM RIYADH SA IMMEDIATE
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0003
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 001346

SIPDIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR OVP, DEPARTMENT PASS TO DRL JHANFORD,
NEA/ARP FOR ASTEINFELD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CIA](#) [EU](#) [EUN](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#)

PHUM, PREL, PTER, SA, SP, UNGA

SUBJECT: SAUDIS REQUEST USG SUPPORT FOR U.N. SESSION ON
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

REF: A. RIYADH 1209 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. RIYADH 1218 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)C. NEW YORK 753

[1](#)D. MADRID 799

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Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires David Rundell
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 6.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal will call for UN endorsement of Saudi King Abdullah's Interfaith Dialogue initiative in his address to the upcoming 2008 U.N. General Assembly. A Saudi MFA official revealed that the Saudi Foreign Minister will use his UNGA address to announce a concrete next step to build on July's Madrid Conference. The Saudis have made clear - in this and previous discussions - that they would appreciate, if not expect, U.S. support for their proposal. END SUMMARY

[1](#)3. (C) In an August 26 meeting with EmbOffs, MFA Acting Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Mojahid Ali al-Wahbi detailed the SAG's plans for advancing Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud's Interfaith Dialogue initiative. Al-Wahbi told us that Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal will use his address to the UNGA to announce a concrete next step to build on July's Madrid Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. He admitted that the recently held Madrid Conference was rushed and therefore there was insufficient time to properly prepare for that event. However, he noted, the Saudis are now using these slow summer months to take a more cautious and thoughtful approach. He stated the SAG would appreciate "support from our friends, especially the United States" in moving the Interfaith Dialogue initiative to its next phase. He added that the Saudis hope to maintain the apolitical nature of the Interfaith Dialogue.

¶4. (C) The Saudis seek UN endorsement of the Interfaith Dialogue, and of the Madrid outcome document, through a resolution adopted at a special session of the UNGA. Beyond Prince Saud's speech, however, al-Wahbi was unclear about what process the Saudis would follow to achieve this. He said the SAG would engage in high level contacts in Washington and other capitals, but equivocated when we recommended the Saudis establish contact on this topic with USUN.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Announcing the Interfaith Dialogue's next step at the UN General Assembly would allow the Saudis to promote King Abdullah's religious tolerance initiative on the world stage, achieving maximum publicity and promoting the Kingdom as a voice of tolerance. At the same time, a visible announcement would further demonstrate to the Saudi public the sincerity of the King's actions. An UNGA announcement would serve as an effective springboard to further action, but could also expose the King to further criticism from Saudi religious hard-liners. Al-Qaeda has already openly called for the King's death for trying to instill greater tolerance of other religions. Internationally, critics would again point out the Kingdom's poor record on human rights and religious freedom. None of this will come to pass, however, unless the Saudis develop a workable strategy at moving their proposal through the UNGA. King Abdullah most likely expects public USG support for his actions, which have the ultimate goal of promoting moderation and combating extremism in Saudi Arabia. END COMMENT

¶6. (C) ACTION REQUEST: This was the latest in a series of Saudi requests for U.S. support of the Interfaith Dialogue

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initiative (Reftels A, B). Post requests Department guidance on the U.S. position regarding public support for the Interfaith Dialogue and support for a possible special session of the UNGA to endorse the results of the Madrid meeting.
RUNDELL